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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Communist Logistical Developments And Prospects In Cambodia

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
June 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

COMMUNIST LOGISTICAL DEVELOPMENTS
AND PROSPECTS IN CAMBODIA

Introduction

1. The development of an overland supply route from southern Laos through Cambodia assumed a critical importance for Hanoi after the spring of 1970 as political developments in Cambodia, followed by the Allied cross-border operations, forced the Communists to look elsewhere than to Sihanoukville as a resupply channel for their forces in southern South Vietnam. This memorandum traces Hanoi's response to the new situation and surveys the course of VC/NVA logistic developments in Cambodia during the 1970-71 dry season.

Discussion

Background: The COSVN Rear Services Logistical Support System

2. The loss of the flow of supplies through Sihanoukville early in 1970 isolated the Communists' rear services apparatus in the COSVN area from external supply sources but did not radically affect the organization of the rear services apparatus in South Vietnam, because these groups did not assume responsibility for materiel until it reached the border areas. The Allied incursions in the spring of 1970, however, shook the entire logistical support organization and, in some cases, severed lines of communications (LOCs) for months.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research.

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3. Prior to the cross-border operations there were at least eight Rear Services Groups (RSG) in GVN Military Region (MR) 3 - RSGs 50, 70, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, and 100 1/ - operating on four main corridors, three extending north to south from the Cambodian border and the fourth west to east from the Parrot's Beak area (see the map). In GVN MR 4, most transportation functions were the responsibility of local units or transportation elements attached to military units. In the western sector of this region, there were three transportation battalions - the 195th, 196th, and the D16th - which serviced enemy main force regiments in the Seven Mountains and U Minh Forest areas.

4. The eight RSGs in GVN MR 3 are believed to have been of regimental size, some with personnel strengths of more than 2,000, and were subordinate to the Rear Services Command of COSVN. These groups were aided in their task of resupplying Communist main force regiments in MR 3 by local Forward Supply Councils and other organizations which mobilized manpower and provided food and shelter. The easternmost corridor, serviced by RSGs 86, 81, and 84, began on the Cambodia-Phuoc Long Province border and ran south through Phuoc Long into eastern Bien Hoa and southern Long Khanh Provinces. The next corridor was serviced by RSG 70 and extended south along the Binh Long - Phuoc Long border from the Cambodian border and ended in the northern areas of Binh Duong Province. The westernmost north-south corridor from Cambodia was serviced by RSGs 50, 82, and 83 and followed the Saigon River from the Cambodian border to the eastern Hau Nghia Province area. Finally, a corridor extended eastward from the Parrot's Beak into Hau Nghia Province and was serviced by RSGs 100 and 83.

5. When the Allied incursions began, most of the RSGs on the Cambodian border withdrew deeper into Cambodia. RSG 82 currently is in the Chup area of Kompong Cham Province after spending several months in Svay Rieng Province immediately after the incursions. RSG 50 moved north from the Fishhook area and is currently believed to be located on a north-south axis between Chhlong and Phum Krek. The exact location of RSG 70 is unknown, but

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1. *[redacted] a RSG 200 was formed in January 1969 and charged with logistical support operations from the Parrot's Beak area south along the border to Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Siam. While [redacted] "Doan 200" in the general area, it seems unlikely that a RSG of the proportions described above could have existed in the area for so long without being detected. If RSG 200 exists, it probably contributes only marginally to the enemy's war effort.*

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8. At present, the rear services apparatus in southern Indochina probably is capable of distributing to Communist forces in east-central Cambodia and eastern GVN MR 3 any materiel which the 470th Transportation Group (TG) can move into the area from southern Laos. It is probable that contiguous areas also could be supplied on short notice. At present, however, there is no known rear services apparatus which links the RSGs north and northwest of GVN MR 3 with the enemy transportation battalions in GVN MR 4 or the Communist forces in southern and southwestern Cambodia. In fact, most of the reported ammunition shortages since the incursions have come from southwestern GVN MR 3, GVN MR 4, and those areas of Cambodia south and west of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng

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Provinces. Such an apparatus may exist but be undetected. The enemy may be partially servicing this area by sea; this is suggested by the sea infiltration attempts which have increased considerably in the past 12 months.

The Level of Logistic Activity in Northern Cambodia


9. During the 1970-71 dry season the Communists in northern Cambodia began developing a viable overland logistic route by constructing about 200 miles of new roads or improved motorable trails and increasing traffic flows over the expanded system. Most of this construction occurred between January and February, by which time an operational system from Laos into Stung Treng was completed. While overall flows have increased, quantification is not possible; probably some of the input was absorbed in the immediate area to support increased manpower commitments and the construction effort, while some filtered south to COSVN. By May 1971 the overall system was a viable extension of the Laotian network. [REDACTED]

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have constructed or improved about 200 miles of new roads and improved motorable trails on key transportation corridors in northern Cambodia (see the map). Most of the more important construction occurred between January and February, by which time the VC/NVA had completed a continuous motorable link between southern Laos and Stung Treng (which showed evidence of increased truck use) and had considerably improved their overall capabilities by constructing various bypasses around potential trouble spots, establishing new storage areas, and developing new transshipment points and alternate roads. By May the Cambodian system into Stung Treng, thence into the heart of Cambodia via all-weather Route 13, was a viable extension of the Laotian network. A description of construction activity in northern Cambodia during the 1970-71 dry season is included in Appendix A.

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provided several valuable additional details. According to these reports, the main enemy input corridor from Laos to Stung Treng - Routes 97, 136 (113), 13, and various alternates - have been in good condition and have supported "moderate to heavy" truck traffic since January, with the level of activity expanding during the course of the dry season. Evidence of logistic support facilities along this corridor such as new transshipment areas near the Tonle Kong and along the Mekong north of Stung Treng, suspect enemy row-crops, expanded storage depots, considerable bunker construction - especially along Routes 13, its bypass, and 136 (113) - and numerous truck tracks in suspect supply areas under heavy tree cover have also been reported [redacted] suggesting an overall expansion of supply movement in northern Cambodia as the 1970-71 dry season progressed. 2/ [redacted] Routes 19 and 194 - which run east of Stung Treng and Siem Pang toward South Vietnam - during this dry season; these LOCs were reportedly receiving "extensive activity" near Siem Pang, with numerous truck turn-offs along the routes leading to probable supply areas under heavy foliage. [redacted] "numerous" supply bunkers under construction along Route 194 near Siem Pang. Coverage of Routes 19 and 194 between February and May indicated that the roads were operational but were sustaining only "light" activity toward South Vietnam. The latter suggests that most of the enemy goods delivered into Cambodia via Route 97 during the 1970-71 dry season have been heading south toward Kratie or west of the Mekong via Route 126 toward the Route 12 corridor.

Laos

[redacted] revealed that the Communists began repairing and restoring their road links with Cambodia around early November, about the same time that Route 97 in Cambodia was receiving repairs.

2. *For evidence on enemy supply movements in northern Cambodia, see Appendix B.*

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[redacted]

By mid-December, Routes 962, 1101, 1102, and 110 - which join the Route 92/96 corridor with Route 97 in Cambodia -- were reported to be in good motorable condition and sustaining "light" vehicle traffic (probably associated with the reconstruction effort). Since then, the North Vietnamese have further improved their roadnet along the southern border of Laos.

[redacted] have detected a number of new road segments complementing both the exit routes in the tri-border area and those leading to Cambodian Route 97. While [redacted] a gradual increase in vehicle traffic on Route 110 since the first of the year. By mid-January -- and continuing through the end of April -- "moderate to heavy" usage has been noted on the eastern axis leading into the tri-border area.

15. The level of traffic using the western segments leading into Cambodia has been difficult to assess because of inadequate overall reporting. FAC observations since late February, however, indicate that enemy truck traffic on the Cambodian access corridor probably increased significantly, with the western segment receiving "moderate to heavy" traffic toward Cambodia.

[redacted]

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[redacted] During the summer of 1970, there were various references [redacted] to the movement of ordnance into northern Cambodia via the Mekong and Tonle Kong. Several reports mentioned enemy purchase or confiscation of boats and vehicles in the Stung Treng - Siem Pang area during May-September, ostensibly to prime the system for future inputs from southern Laos. In addition, [redacted] the continued smuggling of undefined quantities of foodstuffs and gasoline into Cambodia from Chinese merchants in Pakse, Laos. [redacted] the flow was "continuous," [redacted] two or three boats a night (estimated capacity of 4-6 tons) moved the goods on the Mekong from Khong Island to Stung

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3. *The Communists also have apparently organized a fairly substantial supply line for the movement of rice from Cambodia into Laos. Although information on current rice deliveries is not complete,* [redacted]

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[redacted] such a flow has continued since the summer of 1970. However, we are unable to determine if it has matched or exceeded the rice shipments that averaged 20 tons daily flowing north into Stung Treng -- and presumably into Laos -- between 1966 and 1969. The Communists control several key rice-producing areas in Cambodia and have been noted actively exploiting crops in Prey Veng and Kompong Cham.

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[redacted]

Treng for an undefined period, and a third reported that three boat-loads of rice and salt were shipped daily from Khong Island to Stung Treng during the last week of June and first two weeks of July -- the calculated equivalent of about 250 tons or almost 12 tons a day. Reporting during the last quarter of 1970 and January-April 1971 contained more specific data on quantities and types of goods moved. [redacted]

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[redacted] began to furnish the first indications of enemy improvements to the road system in northern Cambodia as the dry season logistic campaign in southern Laos began to pick up steam. For some of the more important examples [redacted]

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enemy seldom moves, and do not remain in any one area -- particularly high-threat areas -- for any appreciable length of time; [redacted]

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Conclusions

21. Overall Communist logistical capabilities in Cambodia should continue to improve during the next year. The enemy's logistic apparatus at the end of the 1970-71 dry season is sufficient to support continued supply inputs into Cambodia and, barring any serious wet season deterioration or major strategic shifts in the balance of forces in Cambodia, should be in an excellent position to resume increased supply shipments during the 1971-72 dry season. Moreover, Route 13 between Stung Treng and the South Vietnamese border is an all-weather road capable of sustaining some supply throughput during the upcoming wet season. The Mekong and Tonle Kong, with enhanced capability during the rainy season, also could be used to continue some shipments within Cambodia to support further southward movement via Route 13.

22. The Communists' logistical capabilities south of Stung Treng can be expected to improve in the next twelve months but they have not yet demonstrated a capability to move large quantities of materiel from their base areas in Kompong Cham and Kratie Provinces into southern Cambodia and GVN MR 4. Small amounts of supplies do, of course, move into these areas, and the Communists have managed to support a viable military presence from locally procured supplies and from existing stockpiles. We have not yet detected, however, a system capable of providing logistical support adequate to sustain heavy military activity. If the Communists are bent on developing such a system, they seem to have three main ways they could go about it. First, they could develop a route through Prey Veng and Svay Rieng Provinces in Cambodia southwesterly to Kandal and Takeo Provinces, thence to southwestern Cambodia and GVN MR 4. The major disadvantage of this option, however, is that it is more vulnerable to ARVN operations than a more westerly route. Second, they could move materiel from their Kompong Cham and Kratie base areas west and then south, in effect going north of Phnom Penh. The materiel could then travel through Kompong Speu Province into northern Kampot where [redacted] [redacted] the enemy has already established several extensive base areas. Last, the Communists could make further resort to increased sea infiltration. [redacted] the enemy has reactivated RSG 962 which in 1965 was tasked with receiving materiel infiltrated by sea

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to the east coast of GVN MR 4. [redacted] indicate that the Communists already have been more successful in infiltrating supplies by sea in recent months.

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23. Of these options, the enemy probably will rely most heavily on the first. Development of a supply route through Prey Veng and Svay Rieng Provinces would permit use of security troops for military purposes in an area where rice supplies are accessible, some logistic assets already exist, and the large Vietnamese population would be more amenable. Resupply by sea cannot be counted on as a regular and safe option, although the enemy will continue attempts to resupply by this complementary mode. The necessity of shifting troops from border areas makes establishment of a supply route north and west of Phnom Penh the least likely choice as the major Communist supply route. Whichever option or combination of options the enemy elects, he still has some time to get the system organized. We estimate that the Communists had about 2,500 tons of arms and ammunition remaining from the Sihanoukville flow as of 1 February 1971. Despite some obvious drawdowns from these stocks, the remaining supplies plus the flow observed this dry season is undoubtedly adequate to permit combat to be continued at at least the present levels well into the next dry season.

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APPENDIX A

Enemy Construction Activity in Northern Cambodia
During the 1970-71 Dry Season

The following compilation lists Communist construction of new roads and improved motorable trails in northern Cambodia during the 1970-71 dry season. In all, about 200 miles have been added to the original network, providing the Communists with a viable, flexible extension of the Laotian network. The new developments include:

- a. Improvements to Route 97, the main access route into Cambodia from southern Laos. About 25 miles were renovated between the Laotian border and a point about 10 miles north of Siem Pang. (November)
- b. Initial evidence of an extension north off of Route 126 toward Preah Angkoal -- often mentioned as an enemy supply area -- and the Mekong. (December)
- c. Construction of a four-mile bypass to Route 97 near the Laotian border at a river crossing, a potential trouble spot. (December)
- d. Construction of a 20-mile bypass to Route 13 to the Mekong and, possibly, a link across the Mekong to the probable new road north of Route 126. (January)
- e. Initial clearing activity along Route 97 east of the Tonle Kong north of Siem Pang. (February)
- f. Construction of a 25-mile connection between the old terminus of Route 97 about 10 miles north of Siem Pang and Route 13 near the Laotian border. This important link, which enables VC/NVA supply flows to move unimpeded from Laos to Stung Treng and beyond, was completed and sustaining traffic between 8 January and 9 February.
- g. New road construction about 60 miles south of Siem Pang along the east bank of the Tonle Kong to Route 19, an

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apparent extension of Route 97 toward Stung Treng.
(March and April)

- h. Construction of an alternate route system generally parallel to the 25-mile connection between Route 97 and Route 13 (item f). (March)

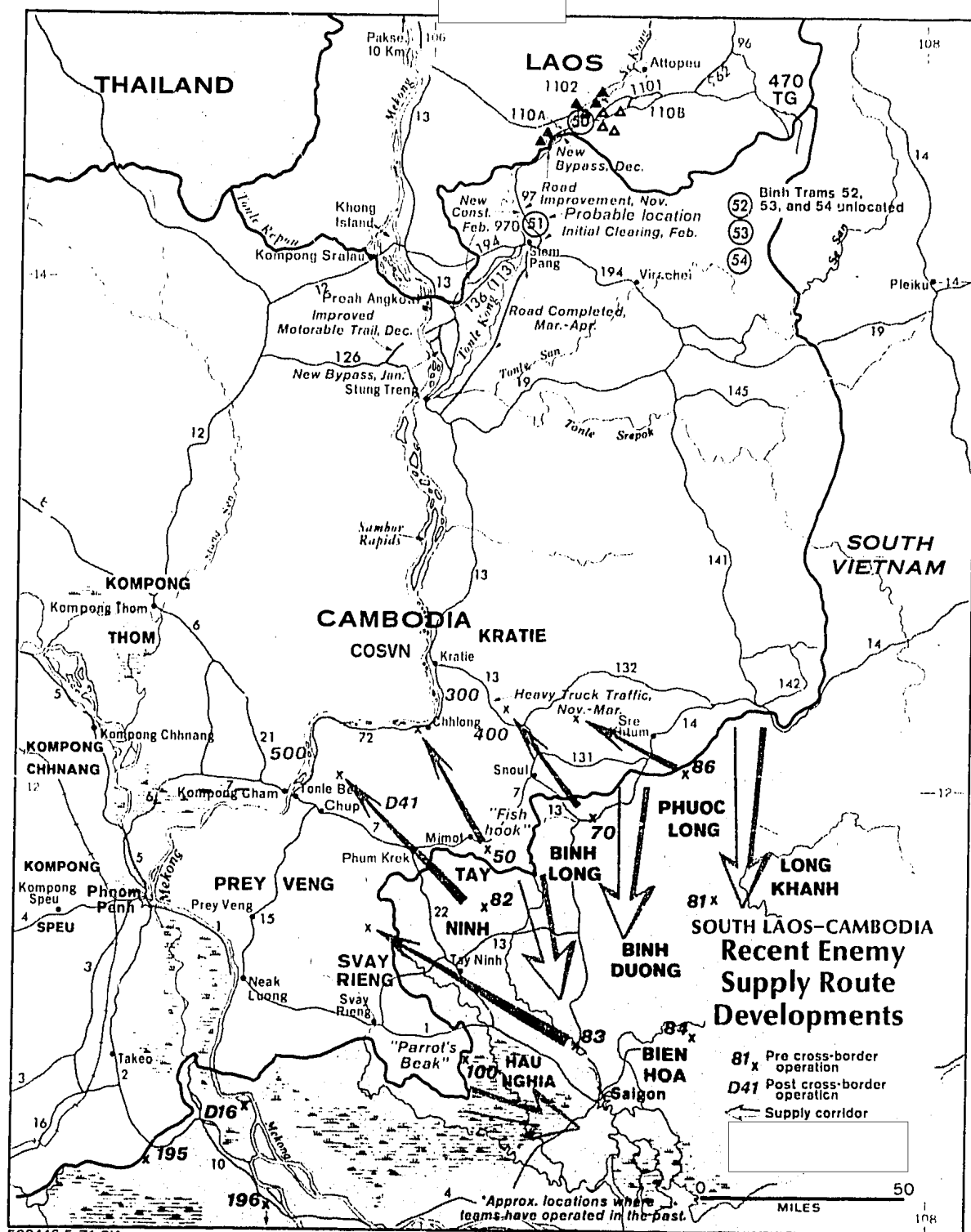
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